



BILLING CODE 3510-22-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

RIN 0648-XF945

Endangered and Threatened Species; Take of Anadromous Fish

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Notice; applications for one new scientific research permit and five scientific research permit renewals.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that NMFS has received six scientific research permit application requests relating to Pacific salmon and steelhead. The proposed research is intended to increase knowledge of species listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and to help guide management and conservation efforts. The applications may be viewed online at:

https://apps.nmfs.noaa.gov/preview/preview_open_for_comment.cfm.

DATES: Comments or requests for a public hearing on the applications must be received at the appropriate address or fax number (see **ADDRESSES**) no later than 5 p.m. Pacific standard time on **[INSERT DATE 30 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER]**.

ADDRESSES: Written comments on the applications should be sent to the Protected Resources Division, NMFS, 1201 NE Lloyd Blvd., Suite 1100, Portland, OR 97232-1274. Comments may also be sent via fax to 503-230-5441 or by e-mail to nmfs.nwr.apps@noaa.gov (include the permit number in the subject line of the fax or email).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Rob Clapp, Portland, OR (ph.: 503-231-2314), Fax: 503-230-5441, e-mail: *Robert.Clapp@noaa.gov*). Permit application instructions are available from the address above, or online at <https://apps.nmfs.noaa.gov>.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Species Covered in This Notice

The following listed species are covered in this notice:

Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*): Endangered upper Columbia River (UCR); threatened Snake River (SR) spring/summer (spr/sum), threatened SR fall-run.

Steelhead (*O. mykiss*): Threatened UCR; threatened SR; threatened middle Columbia River (MCR).

Sockeye salmon (*O. nerka*): Endangered SR.

Authority

Scientific research permits are issued in accordance with section 10(a)(1)(A) of the ESA (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*) and regulations governing listed fish and wildlife permits (50 CFR parts 222-226). NMFS issues permits based on findings that such permits: (1) are applied for in good faith; (2) if granted and exercised, would not operate to the disadvantage of the listed species that are the subject of the permit; and (3) are consistent with the purposes and policy of section 2 of the ESA. The authority to take listed species is subject to conditions set forth in the permits.

Anyone requesting a hearing on an application listed in this notice should set out the specific reasons why a hearing on that application would be appropriate (see **ADDRESSES**). Such hearings are held at the discretion of the Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NMFS.

Applications Received

Permit 1124 – 6R

The IDFG is seeking to renew for five years a permit under which they have been conducting six research projects in the Snake River basin for nearly 20 years. The permit would continue to cover the following actions: One general fish population inventory; one project designed to monitor fish health throughout the state; two projects looking at natural and hatchery Chinook salmon production (in which sockeye may rarely be captured); one project monitoring natural steelhead; and one project centering on monitoring sockeye salmon recovery in Idaho. Much of the work being conducted under these projects is covered by other ESA authorizations; the work contemplated here is only the work that portion of the research that may affect sockeye salmon. The purposes of the research are therefore to monitor listed salmonid health, help guide sockeye salmon recovery operations, and to rescue sockeye salmon in need imperiled by circumstances such as being trapped by low flows. The benefits to the salmon would come in the form of information to help guide resource managers in restoring the listed fish and, as stated, in directly rescuing them from peril. The fish would be captured by various methods—screw traps, electrofishing, hook-and-line-angling, mid-water trawl—and most captured fish would immediately be released. The researchers do not intend to kill any of the captured fish, but a few may die as an inadvertent result of the research.

Permit 1134 – 7R

The Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (CRITFC) is seeking to renew for five years a permit under which they have been conducting research for nearly 20 years. The permit would continue covering five study projects that, among them, would annually take adult and juvenile threatened SR spring/summer Chinook salmon and adult and juvenile threatened SR steelhead in the Snake River basin. There have been some changes in the research over the last

ten years; nonetheless, the projects proposed are largely continuations of ongoing research. They are: Project 1—Adult Spring/summer and Fall Chinook Salmon and Summer Steelhead Ground and Aerial Spawning Ground Surveys; Project 2—Cryopreservation of Spring/summer Chinook Salmon and Summer Steelhead Gametes; Project 3—Adult Chinook Salmon Abundance Monitoring Using Video Weirs, Acoustic Imaging, and passive integrated transponder (PIT) tag Detectors in the South Fork Salmon River; Project 4—Snorkel, Seine, fyke net, Minnow Trap, and Electrofishing Surveys and Collection of Juvenile Chinook Salmon and Steelhead; and Project 5—Juvenile Anadromous Salmonid Emigration Studies Using Rotary Screw Traps. Under these tasks, listed adult and juvenile salmon would be variously (1) observed/harassed during fish population and production monitoring surveys; (2) captured (using seines, trawls, traps, hook-and-line angling equipment, and electrofishing equipment) and anesthetized; (3) sampled for biological information and tissue samples, (4) PIT-tagged or tagged with other identifiers, (5) and released.

The research has many purposes and would benefit listed salmon and steelhead in different ways. However, in general, the studies are part of ongoing efforts to monitor the status of listed species in the Snake River basin and to use those data to inform decisions about land- and fisheries management actions and to help prioritize and plan recovery measures for the listed species. Under the proposal, the studies would continue to benefit listed species by generating population abundance estimates, allowing comparisons to be made between naturally reproducing populations and those being supplemented with hatchery fish, and helping preserve listed salmon and steelhead genetic diversity. The CRITFC researchers do not intend to kill any of the fish being captured, but a small percentage may die as a result of the research activities.

Permit 13380 – 3R

The NWFSC is seeking to renew for five years a permit that currently allows them to annually take natural juvenile SR spring/summer Chinook salmon and SR steelhead in the Salmon River subbasin in Idaho. This research has been in progress for over ten years and is designed to assess three alternative methods of nutrient enhancement (Salmon carcasses, carcass analogues, and nutrient pellets) on biological communities in Columbia River tributaries. In general, the purpose of the research is to learn how salmonids acquire nutrients from the carcasses of dead spawners and test three methods of using those nutrients to increase growth and survival among naturally produced salmonids. The research would benefit the fish by helping managers use nutrient enhancement techniques to recover listed salmonid populations. Moreover, managers would gain a broader understanding of the role marine-derived nutrients play in ecosystem health as a whole. This, in turn, would help inform management decisions and actions intended to help salmon recovery in the future.

Under the proposed research, the fish would variously be (1) captured (using seines, nets, traps, and possibly, electrofishing equipment) and anesthetized; (2) measured, weighed and fin-clipped; (3) held for a time in enclosures in the stream from which they are captured; and (4) released. A number of the captured fish would also be intentionally killed so the researchers may conduct stable isotope, otolith, and diet analyses with the purpose of linking growth and survival to habitat conditions. It is also likely that a small percentage of the fish being captured would unintentionally be killed during the process; in such instances, any unintentional mortalities would be used in place of any fish that would otherwise be lethally taken. In addition, tissue samples would be taken from adult carcasses.

Permit 14283 – 3R

Environmental Assessment Services (EAS) is seeking to renew for five years a permit that currently allows them to annually take listed fish in the mid- and upper Columbia River in support of the U.S. Department of Energy's Hanford Site Cleanup Mission and regulatory drivers under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA). The research would take place in four areas the Columbia River waters extending from McNary Dam to a point upstream of Wanapum Dam. The researchers are targeting non-listed resident fish but may also capture UCR steelhead and Chinook, MCR steelhead, SR fall Chinook, SR spr/sum Chinook, and SR Steelhead. The research would benefit listed fish by helping monitor and reduce contamination from the Hanford Nuclear Reservation. The researchers would capture the fish using electrofishing, hook and line, and long-line techniques. Any captured listed fish would immediately be released. The researchers do not propose to kill any listed fish but a small number may inadvertently be killed by the activities.

Permit 16979 – 2R

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is seeking a five-year permit to collect data on UCR Chinook and steelhead abundance, status, distribution, diversity, species/ecological interactions, and behavior in the Columbia River from its confluence with the Yakima River upstream to Chief Joseph Dam. The research would benefit fish by helping managers (1) understand the distribution and proportion of hatchery and natural origin steelhead, and Chinook in UCR tributaries, (2) understand the influences of other biotic and abiotic factors with respect to recovering listed species, (3) understand the potential effects of proposed land use practices, (4) determine appropriate regulatory and habitat protection measures in the areas where land use actions are planned, (5) project the impacts of potential hydraulic projects, and

(6) evaluate the effectiveness of local forest practices and instream habitat improvement projects in terms of their ability to protect and enhance listed salmonid populations.

The researchers would capture fish via a wide variety of means (snorkeling, dip netting, seining, using electrofishing equipment, traps and weirs, and barbless hook-and-line sampling). The captured fish would be variously tissue sampled, measured, tagged, allowed to recover, and released. The researchers do not intend to kill any of the fish being captured, but a small percentage of them may inadvertently be killed as a result of the proposed activities.

Permit 21571

The United States Geological Survey (USGS) is seeking a five-year permit to conduct research on migration survival among middle Columbia River steelhead in the Yakima River system in Washington State. The research would look at how well the listed fish are surviving passage through various reaches of the Yakima River. The research would benefit the listed fish by helping managers understand what survival risks the young salmonids face when migrating downriver in the Yakima system. The managers would then be able to use that information to take actions designed to increase fish survival. The USGS researchers would capture juvenile MCR steelhead and tag them with acoustic and PIT tags. They would then use PIT tag detectors and acoustic receivers to follow the fish as they move downstream. The researchers would also use boat electrofishing equipment to count predators in several reaches, but they would not use that equipment to capture any listed animals for handling an adult steelhead would be avoided in all cases. The researchers do not intend to kill any listed animals, but a small number may die as an inadvertent result of the planned activities.

This notice is provided pursuant to section 10(c) of the ESA. NMFS will evaluate the applications, associated documents, and comments submitted to determine whether the

applications meet the requirements of section 10(a) of the ESA and Federal regulations. The final permit decisions will not be made until after the end of the 30-day comment period. NMFS will publish notice of its final action in the **Federal Register**.

Dated: January 10, 2018.

Angela Somma,

Chief,

Endangered Species Division,

Office of Protected Resources,

National Marine Fisheries Service.

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